

The people of the United States are deeply committed to religious liberty. The 105th Congress overwhelmingly passed the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. This act establishes an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and a nine-member Commission on International Religious Freedom who will monitor the status of religious freedom in foreign countries. Additionally, the Act encourages the President of the United States to become more thoroughly involved by regularly reporting to Congress on the state of religious liberty and by requiring the President to take specific actions against countries which violate this freedom.

Let me emphasize that the Act mandates U.S. Government action against not only countries engaged in persecution of religious believers, but also mandates U.S. Government action against countries that are actively intolerant of religious groups or those that allow societal intolerance to exist. The intolerant actions of Western European governments squarely are in the purview of the Act. The Commission, the Ambassador at Large, and the President are mandated to focus on issues of religious intolerance, and I encourage them to focus on the actions taken by Western European governments in light of international law and international commitments on religious liberty.

Clearly the actions taken by the Governments of France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria call into question the commitment those countries made to "foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect." I urge the Administration to continue raising these issues with the Governments of Western Europe to insure through law and governmental practice that religious freedoms for minorities are protected.

GOOD FRIDAY TRADE AND INVESTMENT ACT

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 1999

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, we're here today because we share a common goal. We all want the peace process in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic to work.

As hard as it is to get folks to sign a peace agreement. It's even harder to make sure that it gets fully implemented.

We feel strongly that the best chance we have to ensure the Good Friday Peace Agreement is fully implemented is by creating jobs and economic growth.

The legislation we are introducing today is the first comprehensive effort by the United States to create real jobs and real investment in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Irish Republic.

Our legislation uses existing trade and investment tools to stimulate tangible economic assistance to the people of Northern Ireland and the border counties. Faced with continued resistance to the Irish free trade efforts of the past, we concluded that a fresh attempt to fashion legislation that could address European reticence while quickly delivering meaningful trade and investment assistance to Northern Ireland and the border counties was in order.

The legislation provides for the creation of a \$300 million Overseas Private Investment Cor-

poration (OPIC) equity fund. Such a fund generates private sector focus and interest in Northern Ireland and the Border area and makes sure that women entrepreneurs have meaningful access to that funding. We believe that the multiplier effect from such a fund could generate a total \$1.2 billion in new private investment.

Our legislation also relies on the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to assist Northern Ireland's exporters to grow their economy and job base. For those of you who don't know, the United States Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provides preferential duty-free entry for approximately 4,500 products from 149 designated beneficiary countries and territories.

GSP lowers the tariff rate for goods being imported into the United States. GSP already is in place for portions of the European Union. Because beneficiary designees are not required to change import policies. GSP designation for Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Irish Republic would not require them to seek an amendment from the EU or the Treaty of Rome.

Finally, the legislation relies on the International Fund for Ireland to increase funding for projects that will create rapid job growth in the private sector. The bill recommends six projects for funding and support that will provide both immediate and mid-term job generating growth.

We feel strongly that now is the time for the U.S. to send a clear, serious and solid signal of support to the parties in Northern Ireland that are struggling to implement the peace agreement.

Stimulating real job creation through improving access to our marketplace and encouraging private investment would send a strong signal to everyone that the price of peace could very well be prosperity.

THE COLUSA BASIN WATERSHED INTEGRATED RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1999

HON. DOUG OSE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 1999

Mr. OSE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Colusa Basin Watershed Integrated Resources Management Act of 1999.

The Colusa Basin drainage area consists of 1,036,000 acres—1,620 square miles—in northern California within Glenn, Colusa and Northern Yolo Counties. The Colusa Basin Drainage District embodies more than 600,000 acres of the Sacramento Valley, spanning from Knights Landing in the south to Orland in the north, with the Sacramento River and the Sierra foothills forming the east and west boundaries.

Flooding in Colusa Basin causes approximately \$4.9 million in property damage each year. In 1995, a major flood did an estimated \$100 million in damage to private and public property. The costs of these floods are borne by residents, local agencies and the Federal Government. Large-scale traditional flood-control methods are not cost effective in the Basin. Instead, local authorities are focused on small-scale structural and non-structural flood control remedies that would produce

flood protection at a reasonable cost and have the added benefit of being environmentally acceptable.

The Colusa Basin and the Bureau of Reclamation have jointly developed an integrated plan that would provide flood protection for cities and agricultural areas by reducing peak runoff flooding along streams; capture storm water for local uses, groundwater recharge, and wildlife purposes; improve water quality; reduce land subsidence; and improve the quality and quantity of fish and wildlife habitat in the region.

The program includes the construction of 11 small, off-stream, environmentally sound foothill reservoirs and 10,000 acres of new wetlands and riparian habitat. This bill is supported by a wide range of interests, including local farm bureaus, cities and counties in the Colusa Basin, irrigation districts, the CALFED Bay-Delta program and conservation groups such as the California Waterfowl Association, among others.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and build upon the bipartisan coalition of cosponsors committed to improving flood control, water quality, and wildlife habitat in northern California.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 1999

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate having the following statement printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD in the appropriate place: Mr. Speaker, on March 16, 1999, I was returning from Moscow where I participated in meetings with leaders of the Russian Duma as part of a Congressional Delegation trip led by my colleague, the Honorable CURT WELDON. The purpose of our trip was to discuss missile defense issues and specifically H.R. 4. As a result, I missed Roll-call votes 51, 52 and 53. Had I been present, I would have voted YES on all three votes.

Rollcall No. 50—H.R. 891, Federal Maritime Commission Authorization Act.

Vote—"Yes."

Mr. Speaker, the Maritime Commission provides needed protections for U.S. shippers and carriers through its oversight and licensing activities. I support this bill which allows the Commission to improve services, address the Y2K computer problem, and continue its mission.

Rollcall No. 52—H.R. 774, Women's Business Center Amendments Act.

Vote—"Yes."

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 775 which will allow more women to benefit from the Women's Business Center program currently operated by the Small Business Administration. This measure simplifies matching fund requirements and increases authorization levels for the program making it easier for communities to establish centers that will educate and encourage small business growth.

Small businesses in this country exemplify the true meaning of what is called the "American Dream". This measure takes another step toward preserving that dream by encouraging more Americans to start their own business.

Rollcall No. 52—H. Con. Res. 25.